MISSOURI Rabies Bill SB 566 ACTION ALERT

MISSOURI Rabies Bill SB 566 ACTION ALERT: Missouri residents please read, contact your legislators to add a medical exemption clause and cross post to other Missouri residents.

MISSOURI: A rabies bill, SB 566 http://www.senate.mo.gov/12info/pdf-bill/intro/SB566.pdf, has been introduced into the Missouri legislature and assigned to the Agriculture, Food Production & Outdoor Resources Committee. The Rabies Challenge Fund has written the letter below requesting that a medical exemption clause be inserted into this bill.

What You Can Do

If you are a Missouri resident, please contact the bill sponsor, Senator Dan Brown, and the Chair of the Agriculture Committee below & ask them to place a medical exemption clause into the language of the bill and to vote that the bill "ought to pass." Request that all of the Missouri pet owners you know to do the same.

Senator Dan Brown (573) 751-5713 Dan.Br...@senate.mo.gov
Senator Brian Munzlinger, Chair of the Agriculture Committee (573) 751-7985 Brian.Munzlin...@senate.mo.gov

January 14, 20012

Senator Dan Brown       Senator Brian Munzlinger

RE: SB 566 Bill Requiring Dogs and Cats to be Vaccinated Against Rabies

Greetings Senators Brown and Munzlinger:

The Rabies Challenge Fund supports passage of the proposed language in SB 566 which would amend Section A, Chapter 322 RSMo, Subsection 322.035 (5) to require that dogs and cats be immunized against rabies in accordance with the current recommendations of the Centers for Disease Control’s (CDC) National Association of State Public Health Veterinarian’s (NASPHV) Rabies Compendium. Also in accordance with the Rabies Compendium, we strongly urge the Committee to insert a rabies medical exemption clause into the language of this bill.

The Rabies Compendium directs that “All vaccines must be administered in accordance with the specifications of the product label or package insert,” and rabies vaccine labels specify that they are for healthy animals. In addition to limiting its rabies vaccine for use in healthy animals, Pfizer’s Defensor 3 label cautions that: “[a] protective immune response may not be elicited if animals are incubating an infectious disease, are malnourished or parasitized, are stressed due to shipment or environmental conditions, are otherwise immunocompromised..”
The states of Alabama, California, Colorado, Connecticut, Florida, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Oregon, Vermont, Virginia, and Wisconsin all have medical exemption clauses for sick animals in their rabies immunization laws/regulations.

Immunologically, the rabies vaccine is the most potent of the veterinary vaccines and associated with significant adverse reactions such as polyneuropathy “resulting in muscular atrophy, inhibition or interruption of neuronal control of tissue and organ function, incoordination, and weakness,”[1] auto-immune hemolytic anemia,[2] thrombocytopenia, anorexia, regional lymphadenomegaly, cutaneous ischemic vasculopathy;[3] autoimmune diseases affecting the thyroid, joints, blood, eyes, skin, kidney, liver, bowel and central nervous system; anaphylactic shock; aggression; seizures; epilepsy; and fibrosarcomas at injection sites are all linked to the rabies vaccine. [4] [5] It is medically unsound for this vaccine to be given to any animal deemed unhealthy by a veterinarian.

A medical exemption clause would allow Missouri veterinarians to write waivers for animals whose medical conditions (such as those with cancer, kidney/liver failure, hemolytic anemia, thrombocytopenia, grand mal seizures, and chronic autoimmune disorders) would be exacerbated by rabies vaccination. The State of Maine inserted such an exemption for dogs into their 3 year rabies protocol, 7 M.R.S.A., Sec. 3922(3), which became effective in April 2005, and not one rabid dog has been reported in the nearly 7 years since.

Maine’s exemption language is as follows:

A. A letter of exemption from vaccination may be submitted for licensure, if a medical reason exists that precludes the vaccination of the dog. Qualifying letters must be in the form of a written statement, signed by a licensed veterinarian, that includes a description of the dog, and the medical reason that precludes vaccination. If the medical reason is temporary, the letter shall indicate a time of expiration of the exemption.

B. A dog exempted under the provisions of paragraph 5 A, above, shall be considered unvaccinated, for the purposes of 10-144 C.M.R. Ch.251, Section 7(B)(1), (Rules Governing Rabies Management) in the case of said dog’s exposure to a confirmed or suspect rabid animal.

Without a provision for medical exemptions in Section A, Chapter 322 RSMo, Missouri’s rabies immunization requirement would thrust an ethical quandary on veterinarians with seriously ill patients -- they must either violate their Veterinarian’s Oath and administer a rabies vaccine contrary to sound medical practice and against the vaccine manufacturer’s labeled instructions, or recommend their clients break the law by not immunizing their unhealthy pets against rabies. Being compelled by law to vaccinate sick dogs and cats against rabies in order for their clients to comply with the statute also puts Missouri’s veterinarians at risk of being held liable for any adverse reactions the animals may suffer after administering a vaccine inconsistently with the labeled directions. Owners of critically ill dogs may choose not to comply with the law rather than jeopardize the lives of their pets and then fail to license their dogs to avoid detection.
On behalf of The Rabies Challenge Fund Charitable Trust and Missouri pet owners, we urge you to insert a medical exemption clause in Senate Bill 566 and to vote that the bill ought to pass. You may contact me at the number below if you would like any scientific data on the rabies vaccine or if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Kris L. Christine
Founder, Co-Trustee
THE RABIES CHALLENGE FUND

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c: Dr. W. Jean Dodds
Dr. Ronald Schultz
Missouri Legislature & Agriculture Committee

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